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insect heralds the season, it must surely be sent by God.' We may mention finally that the decorations of houses and the ornaments on leather or carved wood frequently display the outline figures of the 'mythical' animals leopard, tortoise, or crocodile; again, no deeper significance attaches to them; also, today at least, the figures of 'ordinary' animals as well as other designs are as often employed, being all meant 'for amusement only'.

The most interesting variety of spirits is also the one least clearly conceived. This is the personal spirit or spirit double, which belongs to every person from birth until death and cannot be shed or changed. Men have male, women female, spirit doubles, and both can be either good or evil; there is no accounting for the latter fact, which rests entirely 'with God'. The spirits are also of unequal strength and often jealous of one another, forcing their own feelings of hostility upon their human counterparts. The success of a marriage, for example, will be determined by the manner in which the spirit doubles happen to agree. But the spirits are responsible only for the luck and fate of their human twins, not for their character or morals. A friendly spirit will protect its human twin; it will, for example, betray to him in sleep or dream the name of witches who try to harm him. More generally, the 'good' spirit can give wealth, prosperity, and success in everything, at least as much as its strength permits; a weak spirit might well fail in all these attempts; while 'bad' spirits would intentionally make their twins suffer nightmares, illness, and misfortune of all kinds.

Not every illness is of spirit origin; the illness which readily responds to treatment or has a well-understood physical origin (breaking one's leg, food poisoning, and the like), has nothing to do with spirits. Only stubborn or frequent ailments of obscure origin, and especially mental diseases, are ascribed to the spirit doubles. But again, this does not apply to every form of mental disorder. Thus the Nupe define idiocy in what are to them rational terms, as a mere 'deficiency' (*eti a gbà o*—'the head is insufficient'), and point out that it often goes together with bodily deformities. Like the latter, mental deficiency 'simply happens', for example, owing to some carelessness of the expectant mother. 'Raving lunacy', however, is invariably caused by spirits; and, let us note this, since the spirit doubles are part of divine creation, lunacy, being their gift, is ultimately a gift of God. Yet madmen are in no way vessels of divinity; rather are they instances of the misfortunes and evils which God inscrutably dispenses.

The belief in spirit doubles leads to curious consequences. If the power and morals of the spirit determine the success in life of its human double without determining also the character or morals of

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779 and the world is less sharply conceived than we have phrased it. It is blurred, above all, by the ambiguity of that crucial phrase 'of God'.[1] We can now define it more sharply: The Nupe will generally assert that only certain things in the world are *nya Sokó*, and that others are not; but, when pressed, they will admit that even these 'independent' entities are yet known to God and must in some sense be by his will. Nupe theology, in other words, has not refined its conceptual tools sufficiently to carry this dualism to its logical conclusion. The contrasted concepts which we employed, of things 'willed' by God as against those he only 'suffers' to exist, is beyond its capacity or intentions. Yet the Nupe do express something of the kind in a different way, by default as it were rather than in positive statements, for they leave the share of God in the creation of these 'independent' things of the world unemphasized, like matters that are unimportant and of no consequence. Thus it is important and always stressed that God gave life and ritual to man; and it is unimportant and not normally mentioned that in some fashion divine creation also includes *cigbe*, illness, the shadow soul, evil spirits, lunacy, and witchraft.

I would read a further meaning into this unequal emphasis of the divine share in creation. It suggests, it seems to me, an attempt to gloss over the philosophical difficulties entailed in this conception of a creation which is imperfect and neutral with regard to good and evil. These difficulties might have been resolved in a more sophisticated theology by some pseudo-Thomist doctrine, equating the divine design of the world with perfection and making the world 'left to itself' the source of all imperfections and evils. Yet though Nupe doctrine fails to furnish any such vindication of divine providence, the failure can at least be concealed by the manner in which the doctrine is handled, through emphasis here and 'glossing over' there. These attempts are never more than crude and half-hearted; but the motives behind them are, I think, unmistakable. Indeed, in one instance they even intrude upon the formulated doctrine; and this relates, significantly, to the one form of evil which is specifically and unreservedly ascribed to the deity.

779 753 The two most dreaded diseases are in this sense 'of God'—sleeping sickness (*kpatsūgi*) and leprosy (even called *Sokó 'gū* or *sokogūci*—the 'Illness of God'). Now, God did not pre-ordain them in their deadly form; he created only their possibility, while the actual evils are a consequence of the 'world left to itself', that is, of accident and unpredictable circumstances. When creating man, God placed leprosy and sleeping sickness into every human organism, but he created the two diseases both in male and female form, and an organism possessing one form only remains healthy and

[1] See above, p. 10.

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normal. The actual disease materializes when the two forms happen to be combined in the same person, and the prospects of a cure depend on which 'germ', male or female, is the stronger. Predominantly male leprosy is curable; predominantly female leprosy, fatal. In the case of sleeping sickness everything depends on the treatment, though the prospects are bleak in either case; if a *cigbe* expert succeeds in killing the male 'germ' only, the disease will take its fatal course; in the opposite case death at least will be avoided, though another incurable disease, lunacy, will result.

This is once more a half-hearted vindication of divine providence; all it attempts to prove is that creation is not necessarily evil and that evil things slip into it by chance. Fundamentally, the whole Nupe universe is thus ruled by accident. Such benevolent design as is discernible in it is all too vulnerable and all too easily vitiated by the coexistence of evil. Yet neither are evil and malevolence more securely established. It is true that there is no real struggle between the two, as between opposed wills or destinies, but only the casual share-out of fortunes and misfortunes. Even so there are grounds, if not for an inspiring faith, yet for its cruder version, optimism. And to this, as we shall see, the Nupe firmly cling.

This is not, however, the whole picture. Our view of Nupe religion is still one-sided, based as it is on the doctrine alone, on ideas asserted, taught, and learned as such. Another kind of faith or assurance, less articulate but perhaps more powerful, may spring from the concrete acts of worship, that is, from the psychological stimulations and experiences gained in ritual and other observances. With these the following chapters will deal.

For the moment we need point out only one of the consequences of the Nupe conception of the universe. Clearly, it vouchsafes little certainty or guidance for action. Even the promises of supernatural aid only add to the uncertainties, for as they offer the chance of several trials so they confront the user with the problem of choice, which problem is not always readily solved. But the Nupe universe holds out some promise of certainty and some guidance for action. Both are mechanical and of a case-to-case kind; in other words, they are such as divination can offer. And since this guidance is required both for the problems of everyday life and for the handling of the supernatural tools meant to aid man in these problems, divination becomes a prerequisite, not only of provident action in general, but also of religious actions. It seems logical, therefore, to turn to divination first, and afterwards to ritual, medicine, and to all the other 'supernatural tools'.